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Stockton's Emari DiGiorgio, Associate Professor of Writing, Wins Two National Poetry Awards

For Immediate Release; with photo of DiGiorgio below

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Galloway, N.J. - Emari DiGiorgio, Associate Professor of Writing at Stockton University, recently won two major prizes for her poetry.

DiGiorgio's poem, "Punch Line," won the $1,000 grand prize in the 2016 Auburn Witness Poetry Prize Honoring Jake Adam York, the editors of Southern Humanities Review at Auburn University announced. The poem will be published in an upcoming issue of SHR.

The poet said of her motivation in writing it: "In November 2014, poet Danez Smith penned an open letter to white poets asking, 'What frees you to write odes of the low country of America, to mention the trees and not their wicked history, to write the praise song of night, but not sing of what dark bodies hide cold in daylight?' His letter ignited my own smoldering sense of duty, to make use of my privilege and my poetry to respond to racial violence in America."

DiGiorgio was also the grand prize winner and received $500 in the international 2016 Woodrow Hall Top Shelf Awards sponsored by Woodrow Hall Editions, an imprint of Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf based in Madison, Wisconsin. Her poem, "The Grand Opera of Boko Haram," can be read at **www.PoetryJumpsOfftheShelf.com.**

This contest is designed to provide a wider readership to poems that have already proven their excellence by prior publication or placing in former contests. Entries that met the criteria came from 27 states in the U.S., plus five other countries.

"When I am most shaken by the horrors of the world, horrors that are routine and daily, I find myself writing poems that seek to bear witness. Though a poem cannot bring back these girls or deliver justice, 'The Grand Opera of Boko Haram' attempts to pay tribute to their lives," DiGiorgio explained.

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-continued from page 1-

DiGiorgio, a resident of Ventnor, has previously been named a Distinguished Teaching Artist by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. She is the recipient of the Governor's Award in Arts Education. Her debut book The Things a Body Might Become is forthcoming from ELJ Editions in July 2017, and her poems have appeared in numerous print and online journals. She is also a recipient of a New Jersey State Council on the Arts Poetry Fellowship, the Ellen LaForge Memorial Poetry Prize, and residencies from the Vermont Studio Center, Sundress Academy for the Arts and Rivendell Writers' Colony.

Judge Karla Huston said of her work: "'The Grand Opera of Boko Haram' was written after Henry Reed's 'Naming of Parts,' a poem written during World War II in which he names the parts of a rifle, one he is expected to use, to care for, the naming of which is juxtaposed against the blooming flowers in spring.

"This author updates the poem, making it modern and perhaps more horrifying—the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from a secondary school in a region near Nigeria," Huston continued. "Though 57 escaped, 219 are still missing—after two years. One can only imagine the terror and reluctant acceptance of their fate.

"I couldn't stop thinking about this winning poem. It surfaced in my mind over and over, a poem of witness for those who have no voice," Huston added.

"The Grand Opera of Boko Haram" was originally published in *HEArt* and was a finalist for Cutthroat's 2015 Joy Harjo Prize.

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Emari DiGiorgio